

Our Lady of Peace Cathedral  
1183 Fort St.  
Honolulu  
Honolulu County  
Hawaii

HABS No. HI-28

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
HI,  
2-HONOLU,  
21-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OUR LADY OF PEACE CATHEDRAL

HABS No. HI-28

Location: 1183 Fort Street, Honolulu, Honolulu County, Hawaii.

Occupant: Catholic Diocese of Honolulu.

Owner: Catholic Diocese of Honolulu.

Use: Religious.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

In August 1828 King Kamehameha III granted to Catholic Missionaries to Hawaii "a piece of land in the neighborhood of the port" of Honolulu. This land approximately an acre in size, lay between present-day Fort and Bishop Streets in the business section of the city (see Appendix A). A chapel was soon built on the premises and the mission began its work. But shortly afterwards the missionaries were faced with persecution. Then, in December 1831, they were expelled. Not until eight years later, in 1839, did King Kamehameha III grant religious liberty to the Catholics and allow their priests to return to the islands. Immediately after their return, plans were made for a much larger church to be the spiritual center of their mission work in Hawaii.

In June 1840 a contract was signed with Mr. F. J. Greenway for construction of a large stone church, 115 feet long by 50 feet wide, at a cost of \$14,150. On July 9, 1840 ground was broken and on August 6, the cornerstone was laid by Msgr. Jerome Rouchouze (1833-1843). King Kamehameha III, Governor Kekuanaoa of Oahu, and the officers of a French warship which happened to be in port were in attendance. Almost at once it was decided to enlarge the church by adding 30 feet to its length. However, work was soon interrupted by the bankruptcy of Mr. Greenway, a complicated legal entanglement that involved not only creditors in the islands, but the agents of several foreign governments as well. The work of completing the church was turned over to a Frenchman named Forest and the building was finished in August 1843. On the 15th of that month it was solemnly blessed and dedicated to Our Lady of Peace.

The new cathedral was constructed in a simple classical style using coral blocks from the nearby ocean shore as the chief building material. The outside walls were at first plastered, but after a number of years the exterior was found to be deteriorating and in 1929 the plaster was replaced by a more lasting cement finish. The steeple was square in shape and conformed to the original drawings by Greenway, although it rose above the sanctuary rather than the front of the building as was first planned.

About ten years after the completion of the cathedral, the clock and balls were installed in the tower. The clock is probably the oldest timepiece in Hawaii, having been made in France in the 1820s. Bishop Louis Maigret (1846-1882) of Hawaii thought it would be convenient to have a clock in the tower, as was the European custom, and as had been done at the cathedral in Valparaiso, Chile. Therefore, he asked the brothers in Valparaiso to order a clock similar to theirs for the cathedral in Honolulu. The clock was made in

Paris and upon completion was sent to Valparaíso for inspection. The new clock was so satisfactory that it was decided to keep it in Valparaíso and send the old one already in use there on to Hawaii. This clock arrived in Honolulu in 1852. It was installed immediately and has been in constant operation since that time. Two bells for the cathedral were also imported from France and installed in the tower in 1853. In 1866, however, a new bell, much heavier than the original ones, was received and the steeple of the church was taken down in order to erect another which would accommodate it. This new tower was octagonal in shape.

Major changes were made in the church in 1871. At this time Bishop Maigret had the low ceiling torn down and replaced by the present high ceiling of redwood. It is said that not only did this aid the ventilation and improve the accoustics, but it was now possible to add to the seating capacity by putting in a balcony on both sides. According to a 1948 newspaper report, a concrete floor was laid at this time, but other sources date this floor to 1912.

Sometime during the administration of Bishop Gulstan Report (1892-1903), the third tower on the church was erected. This one, which stands today, is of concrete and replaced the octagonal one put up several years earlier.

Originally the Fort Street entrance facade was ornamented only with pilasters. Bishop Libert Boeynaems (1903-1926) conceived the plan of gradually changing the church into a Gothic edifice. With this idea in view, a Gothic porch was built at the entrance in 1910. The entire plan, however, proved not only impractical but ruinous to the simple style of the cathedral. This porch was, therefore, removed in 1929 and replaced with the present columns. At this time the plaster finish of the outside walls was replaced with a more lasting concrete finish.

The last major alteration in the church building came in 1940. In 1926 the old termite-eaten roof had been replaced by one of heavy tile. In 1940 it was noticed that the balcony was moving away from the walls in places. Architect Josef Van Oort was called in and, upon examination of the building, found that the exterior walls were bulging out under the heavy weight of the new roof. The original trusses had been adequate to support a shingle roof, but apparently were too weak for the later tile roof. Immediate measures were taken to avert any danger. On both sides of the building substantial reinforced concrete buttresses were bonded into the original pilasters of the church. At the balcony level, tie rods were installed to tie all the columns to the new buttresses. In the attic, new steel trusses were added to the old wooden ones, thus insuring safe support for the roof.

There have been some changes in the main altar and furnishings of the cathedral. The first altar was made of wood by the brothers of the church in 1842 and installed soon after the building was completed. It was before this altar that Father Damien De Veuster was ordained in the priesthood in 1863. Father Damien has become famed in Hawaiian and church history as the "Martyr of Molokai" who dedicated his life to serving those afflicted with Hansen's disease at the leper colony on the island of Molokai. In 1926 this wooden

altar was replaced by a new main altar, made from a solid block of Italian marble, which was a gift of the congregation on the occasion of the centenary of the Catholic mission in Hawaii. The huge Calvary rising above the main altar dates from 1870. At either side are oil paintings imported from Paris in 1897. The stained glass windows were imported from Germany in 1929 and the stations of the Cross between the windows were brought to Hawaii from France. The first organ in the church was imported from France about 1847 and was one of the first pipe organs in the Hawaiian islands, having one keyboard and six sets of pipes. Some years later a large English pipe organ was presented to the church and in 1934 a third organ, with over 300 pipes, was installed.

Our Lady of Peace Cathedral ministers to a large, active congregation today and is the center of the Roman Catholic Ministry in Hawaii.

Major sources for this article are:

Robert Schoofs, The Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace, (Honolulu, 1949).

Paradise of the Pacific, 1937, September, pages 5-7.

Star Bulletin, 1948, May 26, page 24, column 5.

Pacific Commercial Advertiser, 1866, June 16, page 3, column 4. Archives of Hawaii. Court cases: Estate of French and Greenway.

Prepared by: Karmen Tiaht  
Hawaii State Archives  
August 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: Although several alterations and restorations have altered both the interior and the exterior, much of the original classic dignity of Our Lady of Peace Cathedral remains visible on its busy commercial street.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior:

1. The front facade is characterized by a tetrastyle Tuscan portico corresponding to, but not defining, the side aisles and nave of the interior. The building measures approximately 51' - 4" by 155' - 5". The peak of the gabled porch is 47' - 9" above grade, excluding the concrete cross. There is a partial basement in the rear, under the sacristy.
2. Foundations: The exterior walls of the basement are coral masonry.
3. Wall construction: The exterior masonry walls are finished in smooth cement stucco painted light cream. The side walls are articulated by buttresses which are not original. A water table at sill height measure 4' above a slightly projecting base of varying height above grade. The plastered pediment of the portico contains a modern jalousy set within a rounded opening. The corresponding plastered wall at the sanctuary contains the clock.
4. Structural system: Bearing masonry walls, now reinforced with buttresses, support a modern steel roof framing system. The vaulted redwood ceiling on the interior is attached directly to a spliced timber frame cut to define the arc of the ceiling. This ceiling is supported by a combination of columns and piers. Additional bracing is found in the 1/2" diameter tie rod at the spring of the arched ceiling and tied to the exterior buttresses. Floors and ceilings over the aisles are framed by wood.
5. Porches: On the Fort Street facade there is a full height tetrastyle Tuscan portico, steps, scored dark cement tile floor and plastered ceiling. On the right side a one-story Tuscan portico projects beyond a semi-octagonal marthex. On the rear, a two-story arcaded porch connects the church to a parish office building.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are three doorways on the entrance porch. The central doorway is arched with molded cement trim. The doorways which flank it are rectangular with identical, but smaller-scaled, profiles. The central double wooden doors are three-paneled (on both faces), 2-5/8" thick, and have two heavy wrought-iron straps in arrow-head design on heavy hinges embedded in the masonry. The doors leading to the side aisles are faced with v-joint vertical boards on both sides. The strap hinges are of a different and more distinctive design than on the center door. All doors have plain pull handles and thumb latches on a decorative escutcheon plate. The doorway on the left side is plain without trim. The double doors and hardware are similar to the flanking doors of the front. There is a single door on the right side, similar in all respects to the left door. The doorway on the rear, between the sacristy and new addition, is arched with molded wood trim. The arched opening above the doors is unglazed but contains a decorative fan design executed in iron straps. The paneling of the double doors is unique.
- b. Windows: The arched window openings on both stories are framed with molded stucco trim. The sill of the lower windows contains as the top of the water table of the wall. Windows on both floors contain leaded stained-glass.
- c. Other openings: Basement ventilators are covered with decorative iron grills. The ventilators in the entablature above the windows are covered with rectangular grids of 1" iron bars.

7. Roof: The gabled roof is covered with red tile.

8. Cornice: There is no cornice on the entry wall of the portico. The Tuscan entablature of the portico extends under the eaves, and dates from the period when the roof was raised.

9. Towers: The tower on the rear rises in two stages separated by a string course, the upper stage beginning at the ridge of the gabled roof. The exposed sides of the lowest stage are plastered. The unexposed face under the present roof shows roof traces of the former lower roof, and the walls painted to imitate stone coursing. (See sheet 6 of the HABS drawings.) This treatment is also visible in the exterior prior to the addition of the 1910 Gothic porch. At that time, this stage was surmounted by an octagonal wooden stage with Gothic fretwork and an octagonal spire. The top stage is now square with two stilted arched openings on each face. The low red pantile roof is hipped and surmounted with an orb and cross.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Flooring plan: Access from the front portico leads directly into the church under the organ gallery, which is supported by two small columns. On the right and left of the entrance doors are concrete steps leading to the galleries. Large Tuscan columns divide the interior into nave and side aisles. The open sanctuary begins midway in the seventh longitudinal bay. A partial screen wall on each side in the sanctuary forms a backdrop for two side altars. A wide central screen wall with an axial alcove for the main altar separates the sanctuary from the two side sacristies and stair hall on the rear.
2. Stairways: The two front stairways are concrete with square plain wood newels and balusters.
3. Flooring: Modern asphalt tile.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: There is a wooden wainscot up to window sill height, above which are paneled plaster walls at the main floor level. The plastered walls on the gallery are treated with three pointed arched panels, the center one containing a window and the outer ones blind. A plaster arch separates each longitudinal bay in the gallery. The plastered upper spandrel between the gallery piers is formed of three suspended arches matching the wall arches. The full height altar wall is treated with two superimposed and engaged Tuscan columns forming two vertical panels behind side altars, and a center panel subdivided into three lancet arched panels. A red and gilt baldichino projects from the central columns.

The ceilings over the aisle and gallery are flat wood panels in a longitudinal direction. The vaulted ceiling is also wood with panels consisting of 13" boards framed by 4" boards, all nailed directly to the wood framing of the vault.

5. Decorative features and trim: The outstanding decorative effect is achieved by the vaulted, paneled ceiling, having the appearance of coffers painted white with gilt trim and further enriched by simple stencil and motifs which vary and appear to be in a random rather than repetitive pattern.

The square paneled piers of the gallery, which are superimposed above the massive round Tuscan columns of the first floor, carry a continuous cornice which also continues on the wall behind the altar. The horizontal emphasis thus created is reinforced by the continuous entablature above the first floor columns. The square piers of the gallery are further enriched on the nave face by two slender engaged colonnettes, complete with projected base and entablature, the latter trimmed in gilt paint.

In each triangular spandrel between the suspended arches are brackets supporting small polychrome statues of saints.

The gallery railing consists of six wood panels containing a quatrefoil inscribed within a square in open fretwork between each bay.

On the lower floor, the wainscoat is treated with lancet-arched panels, over which there are horizontal panels.

D. Site:

1. Orientation: The church faces a general northwest direction on Fort Street, the portico on the public sidewalk. Fort Street is a typical commercial street of shops and offices.
2. Outbuildings: The building is connected at the rear to a two-story stuccoed diocesan office building and school; these form a courtyard with the church.
3. Landscaping: Most of the property on the left of Fort Street is paved for parking, with a concrete sidewalk at the base of the church wall. Beyond the driveway, on the property line, is a modern concrete-block garage which connects with a concrete-block wall to enclose the Fort Street side of the property. On the right of the church this wall is stuccoed and has an arched gateway surmounted by a strap iron cross. A fixed decorative grille is inserted in the head of this arched opening. Near the rear courtyard, a low brick planter contains a natural stone grotto which is surmounted by a gilt statue of the Our Lady of Peace. Adjacent to this planter is a section of the algaroba (Kiawe) tree which grew at the northeast corner of the lot from the seed "brought from the King's garden in Paris" in 1828.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins  
Supervisory Architect  
HABS Hawaii II Project  
August 1967



A: Land Claim Award No. 39

The portion of land which as appears from the informal proof of John L. Mitchener and Richard Charlton was given by Boki, then Governor of the island of Oahu, in the presence of the King to Mgsrs. Bachelot and Short, Catholic missionaries upon their first arrival at these islands in 1829 "but whether for their own private use, or for the use of the mission" does not appear.

Boundaries as defined in the survey of Theophilus Metcalf Esq. on 8th April 1847.

Commencing at East Corner of this place on Garden Street and joining Jones and Makee dwelling house lot on South corner and running South 36 degrees west 1 chain 52 8/12 feet along Garden Street to Stephen Reynolds dwelling house lot. Thence North 49 degrees 45' West 2 Chains 9 11/12 feet along between this and Stephen Reynolds lot to angle north corner of S. Reynolds lots thence South 38 degrees 30' West 15 10/12 feet along S. Reynolds to East corner of the Paty lot (now occupied by Judge Lee) thence North 50 degrees West 2 Chains 11 2/12 feet along the Paty Place to Fort Street 8 inches makai of makia west corner of printing house in this place. Thence North 41 degrees east 1 chain 63 4/12 feet along Fort Street to West corner of Chas. Brewers dwelling house lot then North 50 degrees 45' east 4 chains 4-1/2 feet along makai side of Chas. Brewers-Wrights and Jones and Makees dwelling house lots to Garden Street, the place of commencement taking in all surrounding walls except by house in the Paty lot and including an area of 952-1/2 square athoms.

Rough diagram below.

(This sketch appears on microfilm records.)

